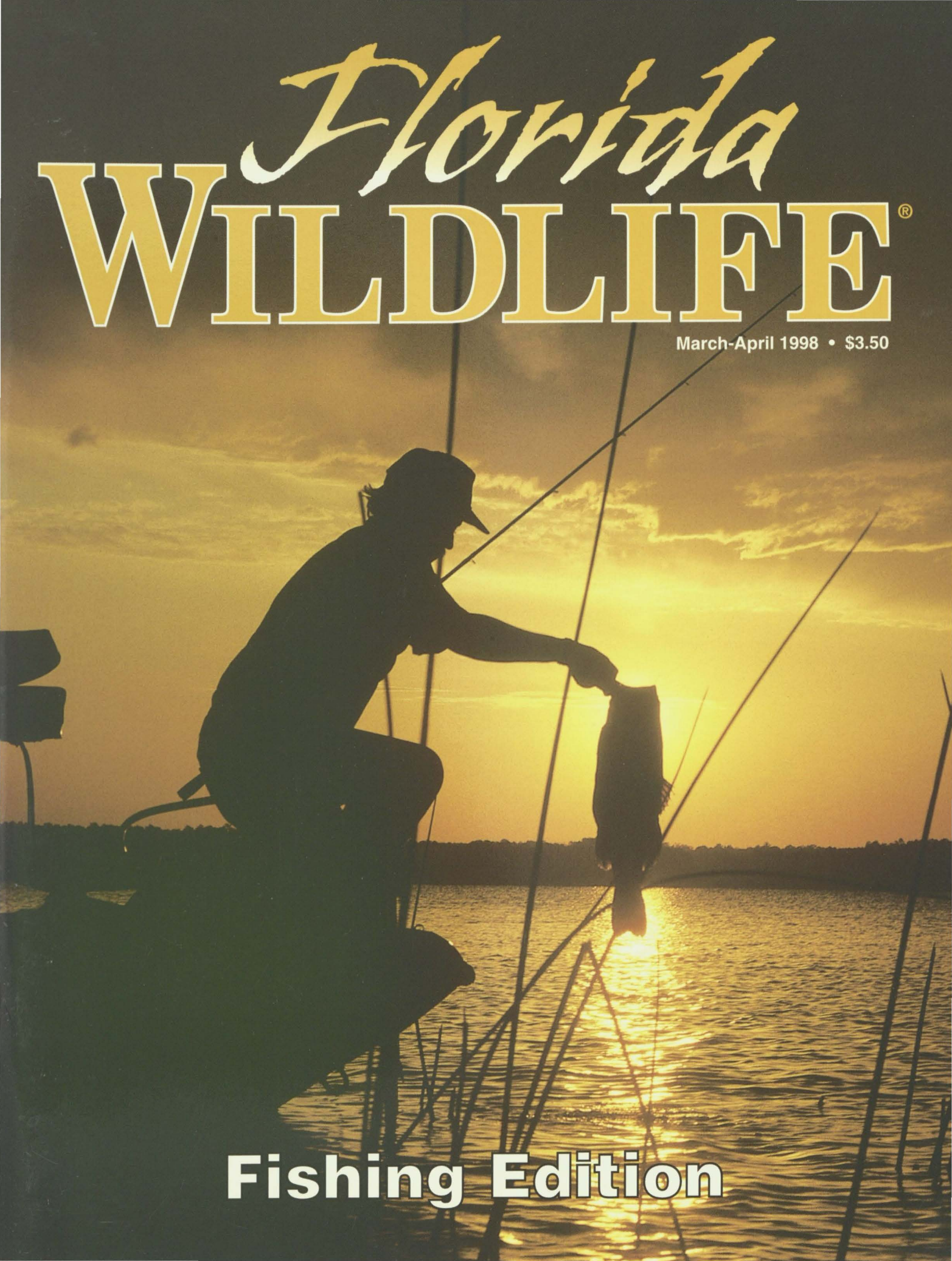


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A silhouette of a person wearing a cap and crouching on a pier, holding up a fish. Several fishing rods are visible, extending from the pier into the water. The background is a bright sunset over a body of water, with the sun low on the horizon and its reflection shimmering on the water's surface. The sky is filled with soft, golden clouds.

Fishing Edition



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CONTENTS

2 Summer Camp in the Glades

Too bad this isn't for adults.

5 It's for the Birds by Alex Kropp

Armchair volunteers needed to watch for painted buntings.

6 Fish Orlando!

From duck ponds to lovely, fish-filled urban lakes.

9 Fish with the Net by Bob Wattendorf

Anything you want to know about fishing.

10 Making Fish Easier to Catch

Is there a fish management area near you?

12 Wildlife Viewing at the Anne Kolb Nature Center

by Ann Morrow

Mangrove periwinkles, coffee bean snails and herds of fiddler crabs.

14 Now You're Cooking: Fish Recipes

Garlic and sesame seeds flavor your bream and bass.

Earn Your Fishing Diploma

No one yet has earned the "Elite" level.

16 The Church of St. Marks by Susan Cerulean

Photo essay of a beloved wildlife refuge.

20 Bag of Tricks by Lt. Stan Kirkland

Going beyond the yelper to bag a spring turkey.

24 Catching Sunshine and Stripers on the Choctawhatchee by Lt. Stan Kirkland

The secret is threadfin shad.

28 Fly-Fishing for Pickerel by Tom Broderidge

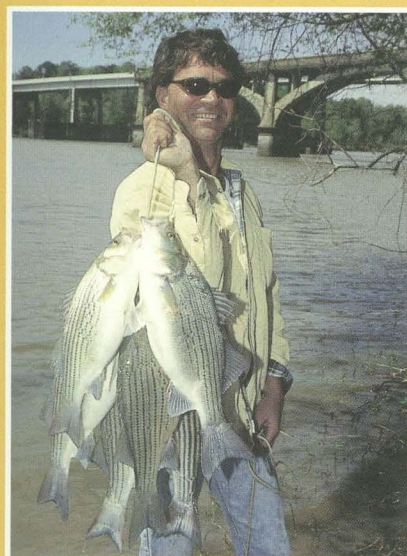
Some respect where it's due.

32 1998-99 Turkey and Waterfowl Stamp Winners

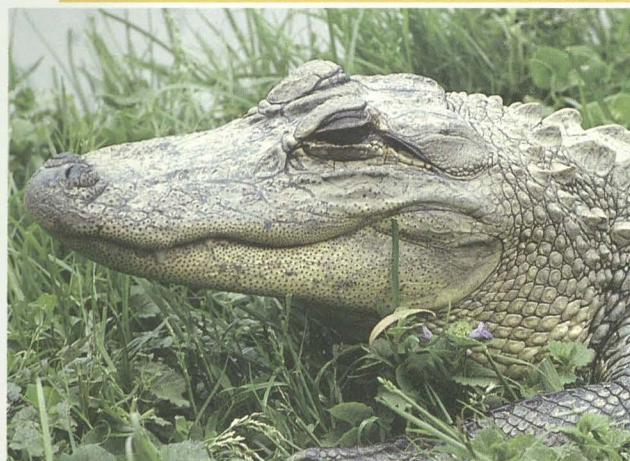
33 Conservation Update

COVERS

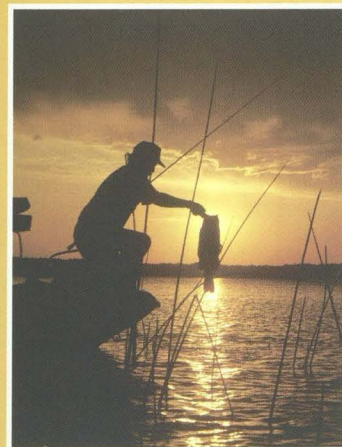
Photographer Doug Stamm caught the lake scene on the front cover of our annual fishing issue. The two anglers on the back were photographed by Tom Evans.



page 24, Sunshine and stripers on the Choctawhatchee



page 16, The Church of St. Marks



Summer Camp in the Glades

By Magazine Staff
Photos by Frank H. Adams

On a steamy summer morning a clamorous group of boys and girls hike a water-logged trail into the upper reaches of the Everglades. They splash along through water ankle deep and more, joking and talking animatedly. Some of the kids fake falling down, take quick dives in swamp water when it's deep enough and emerge laughing.

Sometimes the trail dips further beneath the water, so the kids don't have to feign falling to anoint themselves in the Everglades' mysterious, tannic water.

"I've never done anything like this before," says Kelsey Truckenbrod, a 13-year-old girl from Key Largo. Youngsters on this expedition come from diverse backgrounds, some urban, some rural. All are campers at the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission's (GFC) Everglades Youth Conservation Camp, about 20 miles inland from West Palm Beach.

En route to their campsite, they walk past cypress domes rising from the watery prairie. The tall grass on either side of the trail is streaked yellow, brown and green. Slate-gray and white thunderheads pile high in the sky.



The campers are to spend two nights on an oak hammock, the only reasonably dry spot for some distance. While the tents, sleeping bags and cooking gear were hauled in by swamp buggy, the kids carry small backpacks containing their clothes.

By the time they arrive at the hammock some look pretty tired and bedraggled, but they set up tents before they rest.

Camp counselor Crystal Kinnebrew of Tequesta studies environmental science at the University of Florida and is here at summer camp, in part, for the same reason many of the kids are.

"I wanted to know the Everglades," she says, "because it's one of the most unique places in the world."

The philosophy of the week-long camp is to teach youngsters about nature, especially Florida habitats and the critters that inhabit them, as well as the value of the conservation ethic.

"The kids are our hope for the future," Kinnebrew says. In a summer about 800 youngsters attend the camp.

The youngsters get to unloose their youthful energy at times with activities like swimming and canoeing. Without those outlets, the kids might never slow down enough to enjoy activities that require unfrenzied attention, such as archery or black-powder shooting.

One rainy day Elvin Jackson Jr. is teaching hunter education to 12- to 14-year-olds. To demonstrate the destructive power of firearms, Jackson aims at a water-filled plastic gallon jug with his .45-caliber muzzle-loading rifle. The children murmur when the jug jumps into the air and comes down split apart.

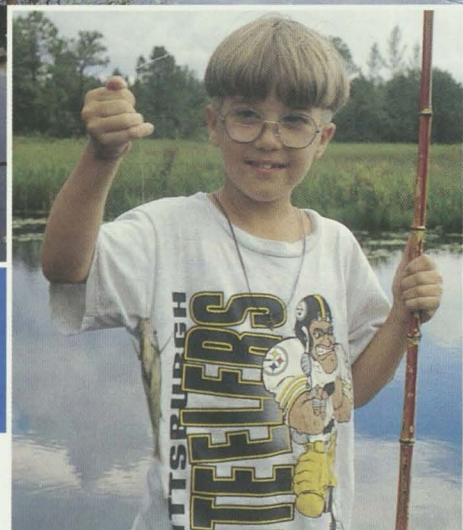
One by one, the campers take their turns at loading the rifle and shooting at the target, practicing safety rules. Some miss completely, some do okay, and others hit very close to the bullseye, drawing quiet praise from onlookers.

The camp is on the GFC's Hungryland Slough of the J.W. Corbett Wildlife Management Area, which occupies over 60,000 acres in Palm Beach County. Around one side of a quiescent lake, rustic cabins line the shore. In front of the cabins, rows of soaked sneakers lie to dry, giving mute testimony to how wet this place is.

Behind the boys' cabins runs a canal



At the Everglades Youth Conservation Camp, children ages 8 to 14 learn about ecology while canoeing, swimming, hiking and fishing Hungryland Slough.



where the youngsters can fish. By late afternoon the rains and cumulonimbus clouds have taken the edge off the summer heat, and the sinking sun bathes the area with soft golden light.

"After it cools down, we have a lot of fish biting," says Daniel Thieman, a camp counselor. "The kids have been having good luck."

Amid squeals of joy, one small girl catches a bream. A boy, a bit older, lands a catfish and shows slightly restrained delight. Both anglers carefully release their fish.

The camp is open for youngsters from 8 to 14, and activities are arranged according to ages.

Eight- and 9-year-olds go into Nature Seekers, where they explore south Florida's ecology, including the water cycle.

Youngsters between 10 and 11 go into the Wild About Wildlife program, where their counselors teach them about

endangered species, predator and prey relationships, and habitat protection. What's great about this is that the kids get to mix fun and learning, through hands-on experience.

Youngsters between 12 and 14 can go on the two-night expedition to camp on the oak hammock, or they can opt for the Wildlife Conservation & Firearms Safety program. Both programs educate them about natural Florida, but if campers in the latter program pass the official hunter education examination, they qualify to purchase hunting licenses when they are old enough.

One morning when the sun hasn't risen too high, boys and girls in the Wild About Wildlife track wade around in the shallows of the lake, peering intently at the water and plants.

Sometimes they pause and then strike suddenly with dip nets, reminiscent of great blue herons when they snag prey with their bills. Next they look through



Wildlife rehabilitators show campers a six-week-old bobcat.

the nets for fish, frogs or any other interesting lake dwellers to put in pans of water for later lessons.

"They're collecting pond organisms so they can see what's down there and we can teach them about the food chain," says Sky DeMuro Miller, a camp counselor who's a student at the University of Vermont.

Later in the day the clouds let loose again and the kids and counselors take refuge in the camp's dining and recreation

hall. The mixture of their conversations sounds like flocks of geese, whose migrations remind us of nature's great cycles kept ever alive by new generations.

Amid the uproar, in an office in a corner of the main hall, program director Janice Kerber explains a little about how the camp affects some campers.

"Do the kids change? Some leave here more self-assured and less afraid. They do adapt and grow even in a week," she says.

The tallest hurdle for campers to leap is the amount of water and what they expect to be in it. "The biggest thing is gators and snakes. They just think walking in that water, they're going to be eaten alive," Kerber says. "Then they get used to it and jump right in."

Along with personal growth, Kerber wants the kids to have fun and learn something too. "I hope that they walk away with a commitment to the environment and appreciation for the outdoors."

Finally the rain relents and most of the kids bound out of the hall to swim and canoe. Some girls stay behind and start sweeping the floor, or at least they move brooms about.

"The boys didn't even sweep," one girl says.

Later that evening, a man and woman from a local wild animal rehabilitation clinic bring in some of their critters.

The rehabilitators bring out a hawk and an owl and explain a little about them. The youngsters are rapt.

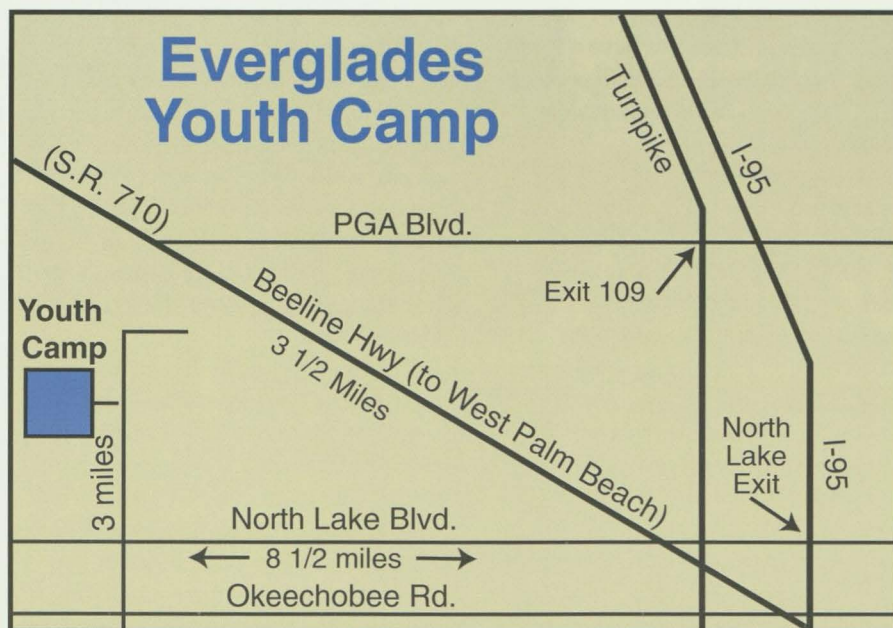
"Will they bite?" one girl asks when it is time for questions. Other kids ask more questions about how the birds live and how well they can see.

When the pair brings out an alligator and a crocodile, no one asks if they bite. The man and woman explain the differences between the two toothy reptiles.

The grand finale features a young bobcat, which, at six weeks old, is as large as a mature house cat, but plays with string like a kitten. Again the kids ask very good questions.

Their questions show that they have done more than take in information. They have processed it. It whetted their appetites for more knowledge and made them think. And if the goal of this camp's programs is to give kids some good times immersed in nature and instill them with a conservation ethic, then it's a soaring success. It's hard to do better than that. 🐾

For a 1998 brochure, contact Tricia Roberts or Judy Gillan at (850) 488-4676. The camp offers seven one-week sessions beginning June 21 and costs \$150. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.



It's For The Birds

Atlantic Coast Birdwatchers Sought

By Alex Kropp

During the summer months, virtually all of Florida's painted buntings nest along a narrow strip of the Atlantic coastline from Merritt Island north to Nassau County. These Atlantic coast birds represent a subspecies of the painted bunting, one of the most colorful songbirds in the United States – their song types and migration patterns are distinct from those found in other parts of the country.

Unfortunately, painted buntings are declining at an alarming rate in Florida, according to Breeding Bird Survey data, despite their unique status and their eye-catching beauty. Little is known about the extent or causes of this decline, although loss of coastal breeding habitats to development is certainly a major factor. About 70 percent of Florida's human population lives near the coast, so natural communities in coastal areas have seen dramatic losses.

Another suspect is the brown-headed cowbird. Unlike most birds, cowbirds are brood parasites that lay their eggs in the nests of other species rather than constructing a nest of their own. This forces "host" parents to feed not only their own but also cowbird nestlings. The larger, faster-growing cowbirds then out-muscle other nestlings for food, often resulting in starvation. Some birds have adapted to dislodge cowbird eggs from their nests, but painted buntings may be particularly susceptible to brood parasitism since their eggs resemble those of the cowbird.

To better understand the problems facing painted buntings and to educate the public about their plight, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) has launched Project Bunting Watch. Participants in northeast Florida are to watch their feeders for painted buntings, cowbirds and other species from May to July.

During the initial year of the project (1996), 87 participants returned data to the GFC with only 35 reporting bunting sightings. By 1997, 200 people returned data but still only about 60 reported painted buntings.

This year the GFC is looking for more participants. To be a Bunting Watcher you must live within the bunting's ten-county breeding range (Nassau, Duval, Baker, Clay, St. Johns,

Putnam, Flagler, Volusia, Seminole and Brevard), have at least one bird feeder and know your common backyard birds. Only 30 minutes per week of summer watching is required.

For more information write: Alexander Kropp, Bureau of Wildlife Diversity Conservation, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, 620 S. Meridian Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1600, or call (850) 414-7929. ●

If you're new at birdwatching, order *Bird Watching Basics* and *Checklist of Florida's Birds* from the Office of Informational Services, Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, 620 South Meridian Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1600.



Barry Mansell

Male painted buntings are a combination of brilliant blue, red, yellow and green; the distinctive pale green plumage of females is reminiscent of the color of lemon-lime sherbet.

Fish

By Fisheries Staff

With nearly 350 lakes and more than 60,000 acres of water lying within Orange County, Orlando affords a huge potential for novice and seasoned anglers.

"We have millions of Floridians now living in urban environments, many of whom have never been exposed to such a basic outdoor endeavor as fishing," said Scott Hardin, a fisheries biologist with the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC).

"Let's face it, those we don't accommodate will probably never take up fishing."

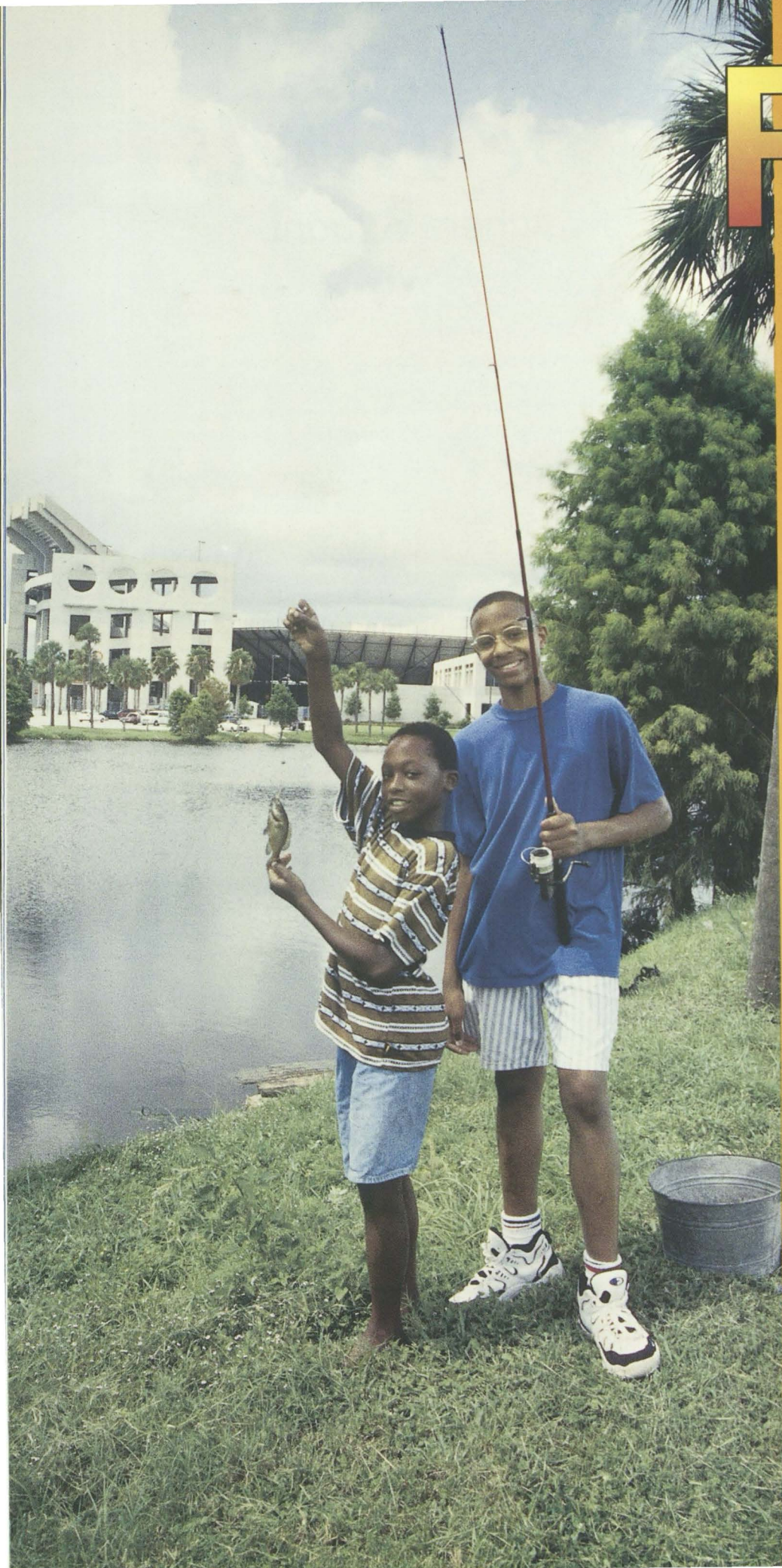
Fish Orlando! is a new GFC program designed to acquaint and recruit city dwellers to the sport. The program is a dramatic expansion of the Central Florida Urban Fisheries Project, initiated in 1991, that intensively manages six lakes and ponds in greater Orlando, and focuses heavily on kids fishing. Fish Orlando! opens up thousands of acres of water for residents and visitors of all ages.

Thus far, Fish Orlando! embraces 16 lakes ranging in size from four to 1,800 acres. Each lake has its individual charms and special regulations. All are targeted to meet various angler objectives.

Lake Lawne

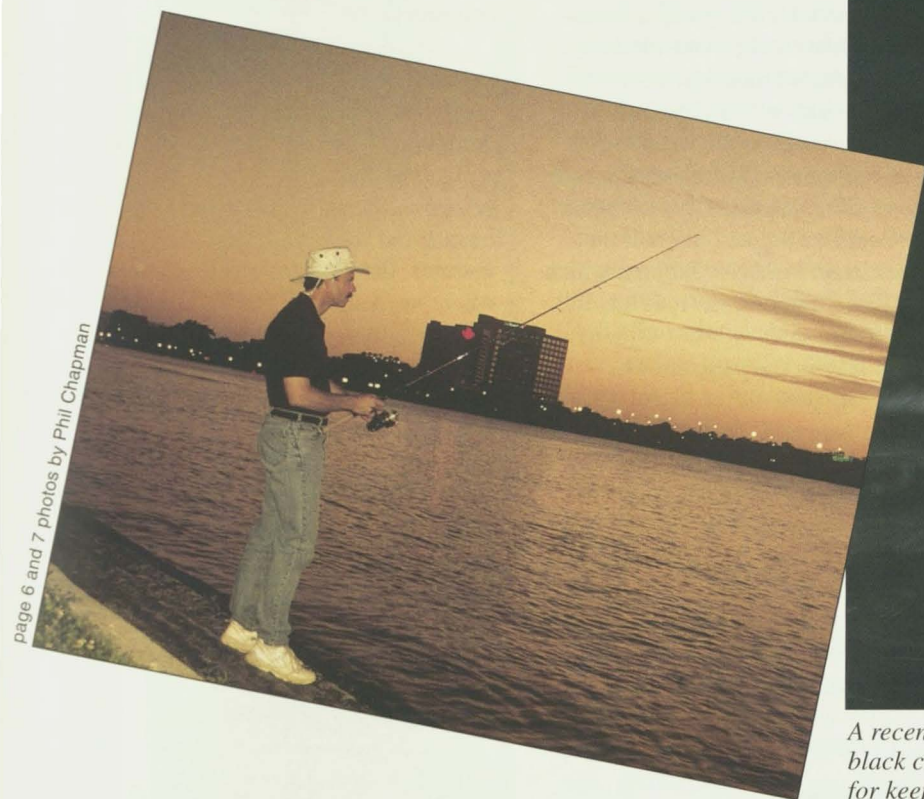
For example, 150-acre Lake Lawne, adjacent to the central Florida fairgrounds, is being managed as a quality black crappie (speckled perch) and channel catfish fishery.

Trawl sampling on Lake Lawne in 1996 and 1997 indicated two strong years for black crappie. However, few large-



Orlando!

With nearly 350 lakes and more than 60,000 acres of water lying within Orange County, Orlando affords a huge potential for novice and seasoned anglers.



A recent tagging in Lake Lawne showed 35 per cent of the black crappie were over 10 inches, the minimum length for keeping.

Tom Evans

mouth bass were found and spawning success for both years was deemed poor. GFC personnel immediately stocked bass into the lake.

Lawne now has reduced bag limits on bream, crappie and catfish: six catfish, 20 panfish (bluegill and shellcracker) and 10 crappie (minimum length of 10 inches) was prescribed. Statewide, the current bag for bream and crappie is 50 fish per person per day, although that may be halved later this year to 25. There are no special limits on largemouth bass for Lake Lawne.

In March or April, GFC biologists will sample for bass again and, if densities are low, conduct a remedial stocking.

Additional measures prescribed for Lake Lawne include increasing the size of

its current fishing pier or adding another, installing fish feeders near the pier, constructing an educational kiosk, and controlling aquatic plants with spot chemical treatments.

Lake Cherokee

At Lake Cherokee, a 12-acre body of water located nine blocks south of Lake Eola, fingerling bass were heavily stocked in May 1997 in hopes of making it a quality bass/bluegill fishery for youngsters and adults. Cherokee's regulations require that all bass be released. However, anglers are allowed to keep up to 20 panfish and six channel catfish daily.

Adequate shoreline access will be provided on Lake Cherokee and an

educational kiosk will be built. Here, as elsewhere, spot aquatic plant management will take place.

Others

Downtown, Clear Lake (313 acres) is deemed a panfish hotspot, as is Lake Estelle (20 acres) on U.S. 17/92 South near Winter Park. Lake Ivanhoe (121 acres) off I-4 is managed for the harvesting of catfish and panfish; Beauty (4 acres), located near the Orlando Regional Hospital, is designated as a quality panfish pond; and 13-acre Lake Lorna Doone at the Citrus Bowl is set aside for the harvesting of catfish and panfish.

Anglers wanting to concentrate on trophy bass might consider casting an ▷

artificial lure, live bait or popping bug into 339-acre Turkey Lake off the turnpike in west Orlando or 150-acre Lake Underhill that straddles the East-West expressway. These are catch-and-release only.

Urban fisheries incorporated into the Fish Orlando! scheme include Lake Dot, a tiny 4-acre pond located in nearby Seminole County, and the 7-acre Lake Secret, situated in the city of Casselberry. Both are being operated for catfish and panfish harvests, as are Lakes Richmond (58 acres) in Richmond Heights and Santiago (7 acres) in Demetree Park.

Potential shoreline fishing access in the form of cleared banks, piers and bulkheads was considered at many of the urban lakes.

Starting Young

The aim of Fish Orlando! is to get more people, especially children, actively involved in fishing through education and participation.

"Efforts to recruit youngsters is intense and on-going," Hardin said, "because studies show that when girls and boys get hooked on fishing early, they're likely to continue throughout their lives."

To energize Hardin's goal, Fish Orlando! has embarked upon a series of special events for 1998.

Last December, for example, a "Kick-off Fishing Derby," pairing University of Florida football players with "at risk" children, was held at Lake Lorna Doone near the football stadium.

From January through March the GFC tagged 400 speckled perch in Clear and Lawne lakes for a two-month-long "crappie-thon" in which anglers catching tagged fish were able to redeem tags for predetermined prizes furnished by local businesses and corporate sponsors.

Under a similar format at various sites, largemouth bass will be targeted from March through May, while tagged bluegill and catfish are featured from June through September.

In spring and fall a combined boating safety/bass fishing trip for kids between 13 and 16 will be held in cooperation with the GFC's Division of Law Enforcement and local bass club members. The young boaters and anglers will take the GFC's Boating Safety Course on Saturday and

The aim of Fish Orlando! is to get more people, especially children, fishing.

then partner up with an adult angler for a bass outing on Sunday.

Fishing derbies throughout the Fish Orlando! network – sponsored and staffed by GFC personnel, civic groups, volunteer organizations and private businesses – will be conducted monthly. These non-competitive events are designed to introduce various groups to existing fishing opportunities. Refreshments and prizes give added impetus at each event.

"It should be pointed out that the statewide Urban Fisheries Project, which includes Fish Orlando!, isn't all fun and games," Hardin said.

"Each lake in the program was selected for its potential to become an outstanding fishery."

Fish Orlando! as well as other Urban Fisheries programs, are undertaken in

partnership with local governments (who maintain ramps and parking facilities), as well as civic groups and volunteers (who help with clearing and sodding, or building piers and docks).

Apart from the sporting benefits, Fish Orlando! improves habitat and water quality in the Orlando area through muck dredging, removal of nuisance vegetation, replanting desirable native aquatic plants, detention of runoff waters in an artificial marsh, and the installation of aeration systems, fish attractors and fish feeders where needed.

"In addition to opening up recreational opportunities to children and adults," Hardin said, "we are able to take an urban lake and maintain it as good habitat for fish while improving water quality." 🐟



Plenty of bank fishing opportunities are within walking distance of downtown Orlando.

Phil Chapman

Fish With The Net

By Bob Wattendorf



- Bass Auto Tag
- Big Catch Program
- Boating Safety
- Boat Ramps
- Fishing Licenses
- Fishing Links
- Fishing Sites
- Fish Species
- Fishing Tips
- Freshwater Rules
- Health Advisories
- License Options
- Publications
- Weather

Located at <http://www.state.fl.us/gfc/fishing/>, GFC's Fisheries Internet site provides all you need to know to fish Florida's fresh waters. The home page will take you to an electronic copy of the "1997-98 Sportfishing Regulations Summary," which offers even more information than the printed version.

You can find out about fishing license options, including the five-year and lifetime varieties, and who needs a license and who is exempt. For now, you call 1-888-347-4356 to instantly order your license, but soon a secure on-line option will allow you to purchase your license and start fishing the same day.

Besides rules, the web site maintains detailed information about the 33 principle species of freshwater fish encountered by recreational anglers in Florida. It also has a complete listing, many with photos, of all of Florida's freshwater fishes from 100-pound-plus alligator gar to tiny darters that scarcely reach an inch in length. You will find fishing tips, answers to questions about fisheries and information on restora-

tion programs, as well as monthly updates on events. News releases of statewide and local interest are posted, and annotated with links, so you can stay abreast of what's happening.

A boat ramp site not only gives you descriptions of more than 200 ramps the GFC maintains, but also links you to detailed maps and routing directions from anywhere in the U.S. The boat ramp site gives plenty of boating safety tips, including a link to an on-line course toward certification as a safe boater. (Remember, anyone born after September 30, 1980 must have a certificate to operate a boat with a motor of 10 horsepower or greater.)

The fishing forecasts give descriptions of some of Florida's best fisheries, along with quarterly forecasts. Remember to also check for news releases that may have even more up-to-date information on a particular region.

There's a lot more to browse through and enjoy on our home pages, but don't neglect the link pages. You can find great sites for planning Florida vacations – arranging hotel rooms, flights, rental cars and fishing guides. There are links to informative aquatic education sites and numerous agencies involved with fish and fishing. Quick links will also tell you about weather forecasts and the lunar phase, to help plan your trips.

If your appetite is whetted, get on line and browse around. Remember, if you don't have a computer yourself, most public libraries do and will show you how to find our Division of Fisheries site, which will continue to expand in the months to come. 🐟

Bob Wattendorf is in charge of special projects for the Division of Fisheries.



Stan Kirkland

Making Fish Easier To Catch

On Fish Management Areas

By Fisheries Staff
Photographs by GFC

Florida is blessed with 12,000 miles of streams and 7,748 lakes covering three million surface acres, not to mention numerous manmade ponds. On some of these, biologists may use an intensive, hands-on approach to improve and maintain fishing. These are designated as Fish Management Areas (FMA). To date, 66 FMAs are scattered throughout the state.

Biologists employ different methods to improve fishing: lake drawdowns, floating tussock removal, aquatic plant establishment and other physical changes that make a water body more productive.

Increasing the size of fish available for anglers to catch, through harvest restrictions, is a high priority on some FMAs. Fish stocking creates new fisheries and improves existing ones. On other FMAs, access enhancement is a priority; this is accomplished by the construction of boat ramps, fishing piers and other improvements for boaters and non-boaters.

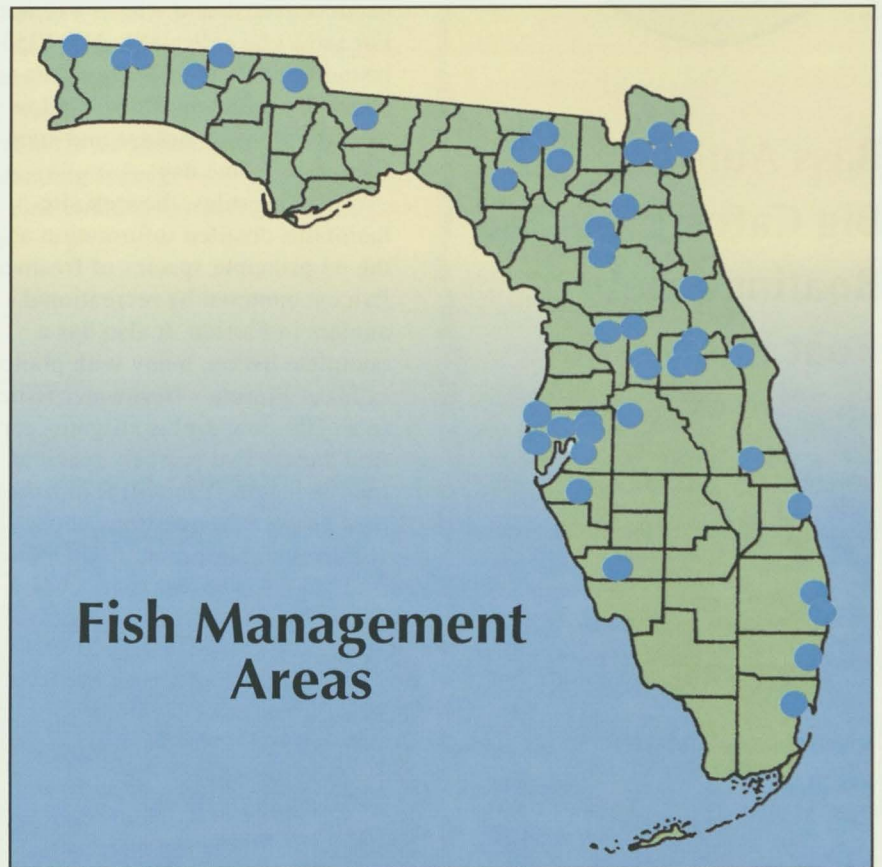
Measures to concentrate fish – attractors and feeders – are often used in conjunction with bank fishing opportunities to allow

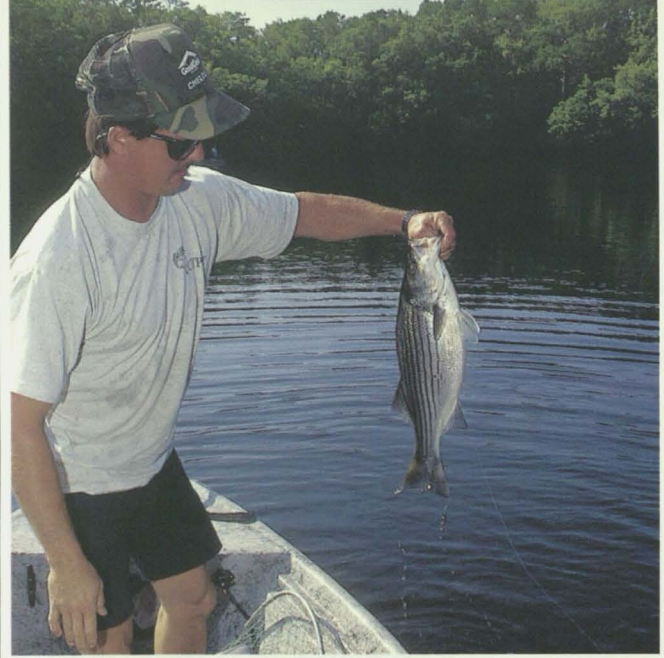
inexperienced anglers such as children a good chance to feel the tug at the end of their line.

Although these are common management practices of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC), they are concentrated in

FMAs, intended to provide anglers a variety of fishing opportunities.

FMAs are located throughout the state. For information about one near you, contact your regional office or visit the GFC's homepage. ●





To date 66 fish management areas are scattered throughout the state.



Tenoroc FMA near Lakeland offers catch-and-release fishing for largemouth bass, children's fishing and handicap fishing.



Merritt's Mill Pond FMA in Jackson County is the place to catch the redear sunfish of a lifetime. You may keep five over 10 inches.



Newnans Lake, left, is stocked with high densities of sunshine bass, as is the Apalachicola, St. Johns and Choctawhatchee rivers.

Wildlife Viewing At The Anne Kolb Nature Center

By Ann Morrow
Photographs by Bill Henderson

It was with a certain amount of skepticism that I traveled to Broward County last March in search of West Lake Park and its mangrove wetlands. I wondered if I would find that Australian pine had swallowed up the mangroves, or if the cacophony of surrounding development would shatter the stillness I sought. From the brochures, I was encouraged by the sheer size of the preserve. Purportedly, this 1500-acre mangrove forest was "the largest of its kind in an 85-mile stretch from Biscayne Bay to West Palm Beach."

My visit coincided with the first anniversary celebration for the park, so there were quite a few cars in the parking lot. A wall of Australian pines separated the parking area from the Intracoastal

Waterway and I could hear the persistent whine of jet-ski motors. Fishing Pier Trail led off into the pines, but I walked in the opposite direction, toward the exhibit hall, trails, observation tower and boat dock, all surrounded by impenetrable-looking tangles of mangroves.

The native mangroves that so intimidated early settlers are today recognized as critical refuges for birds, fishes, crabs and other animals. In fact, these coastal nurseries are some of the most productive ecosystems in the world. More than 80 percent of all south Florida's recreational and commercial fish spawn in waters like West Lake.

Mangroves are best appreciated at water level. It is from that vantage that you can smell the mud and look straight

into the jumbled mass of root and trunk. I had read about the tree-dwelling mangrove crabs and the popping sound made by snapping shrimp found here. I wanted to see mangrove periwinkles, coffee bean snails and herds of fiddler crabs scurrying to and from their muddy burrows.

Canoes, kayaks and jon boats are available for rent at West Lake Park and they would be perfect for exploring any of the four canoe trails. Because of time, I took the 40-minute boat tour.

Our boat passed through narrow channels in the mangroves and out into West Lake, a 350-acre artificial lake dredged and created in the 1920s by one of the county's early developers. The great hurricane of 1926, combined with financial difficulties, caused original





Mangroves are nurseries for fish and invertebrates like the spiny lobster, pink shrimp, mullet, tarpon, snook and mangrove snapper. Restoration of mangroves means better fisheries. Page 12: Exhibit hall overlooks the mangroves.

development plans to fall by the wayside. Years later, a far-sighted county commissioner, Anne Kolb, championed the cause of an Urban Wilderness Park System, and a West Lake Park in particular. She died in 1981, years before the park opened.

From the boat we listened to a good overview of the mangrove ecosystem and watched an osprey, fish clutched in talons, fly overhead. A troop of white ibis probed a patch of exposed mud, and a lone kingfisher noisily proclaimed its intentions as it flew to the top of a red mangrove. Roseate spoonbills sometimes come to feed in shallow water at the lake's edge, the guide told us, but on this day we contented ourselves with the slate blue of a great blue heron.

West Lake Park presents an excellent opportunity to learn how to identify the three varieties of mangroves: red, black and white. (Check out the 3,550-gallon multi-level tidal aquarium in the exhibit hall.) It's also a great place to see saltwater mitigation, the process of restoring mangrove wetlands. Since 1989, over 200 acres of artificial uplands have been cleared of non-indigenous Australian

pine. Workers lowered elevations to create wetlands and dug new channels to allow tidal flushing. Mangrove seedlings were naturally established by tidal action.

As I walked the Observation Trail and Mud Flat Trail later that day, I saw a raccoon scattering masses of fiddler crabs

as it picked its way among the mangrove roots. A yellow-crowned night heron hunched, looking contemplative, on a perch in a black mangrove. And just as I turned to leave, I heard a most distinctive sound — the “popping” of the snapping shrimp.

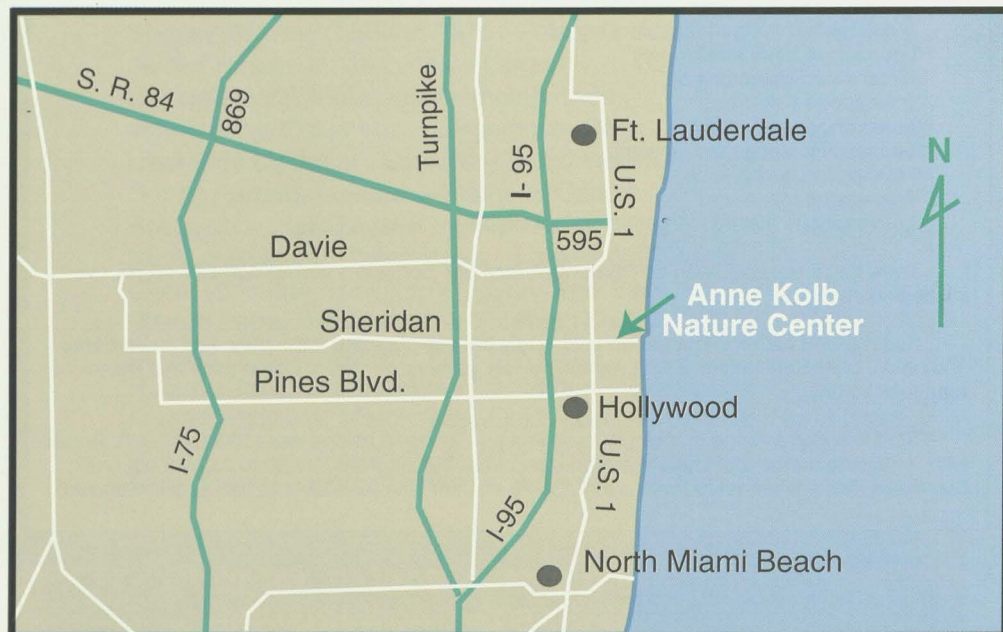
Anne Kolb would be pleased to know that the urban wilderness she envisioned years ago is alive and well.

Hours of operation: Open daily, year-round, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., summer hours 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Boat rentals, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., weekends and holidays from the marina, weekdays from the exhibit hall, which is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily.

Directions: Turn east onto Sheridan Street from I-95 and travel approximately 2.5 miles. The entrance to West Lake Park is on the right. To access the nature center complex, tour-boat dock and fishing pier, continue east on Sheridan Street and look for the entrance on the left, just over the Sheridan Street bridge.

For more information, call (954) 926-2410 or write the Anne Kolb Nature Center at 751 Sheridan Street, Hollywood, FL 33019. 📍

*Ann Morrow is a frequent contributor to **Florida Wildlife**, a wildlife columnist for the **Tallahassee Democrat** and co-author of the **Florida Wildlife Viewing Guide**.*



Now You're Cooking: Fish Recipes

Marinated and Grilled Striped Bass

1/4 cup soy sauce
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon garlic, finely minced
1 tablespoon green onions, finely minced (green part only)
2 tablespoons oil
2 tablespoons sesame seeds
4 Florida striped bass fillets (2 pounds), each cut into 2 pieces, skin on
oil for greasing grill

Prepare marinade – combine soy sauce, sugar, garlic, green onion and oil; set aside. Place sesame seeds in a medium frying pan and stir over medium heat until they begin to brown (they brown quickly, so watch). Add to soy sauce mixture.

Lay fillets skin-down in a single layer in a pan with raised sides. Pour soy mixture over fillets. Let sit for a moment, then turn fillets so they are flesh side down. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

When ready to grill, remove from marinade and place bass on oiled grill over ashen coals, skin side touching grill; grill for 3-4 minutes on one side only. (Do not turn fillets or they will fall apart.) Baste fillets with marinade every minute or so until done. Use a greased spatula to transfer fish to serving platter. Serves 4.

Gourmet Bream

3 pounds pan-dressed bream or other panfish (about 6 ounces each), fresh or frozen
1 tablespoon salt
4 cups (1/2-inch) soft bread cubes
1/2 cup melted margarine or cooking oil
1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
2/3 cup sliced green onions
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup chopped parsley
2 tablespoons chopped pimiento
4 teaspoons lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon marjoram
3 tablespoons melted margarine or cooking oil

Thaw fish if frozen. Clean fish thoroughly and dry. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon salt evenly over inside and outside of fish.

Saute bread cubes in margarine until lightly browned, stirring frequently. Add mushrooms and onion; cook until tender. Stir in remaining salt, parsley, pimiento, lemon juice and marjoram; toss lightly.

Stuff fish and arrange in a single layer in a well-greased baking pan (13 x 8 inches). Brush with remaining margarine. Bake in a moderate oven, 350 degrees, for 20 to 25 minutes until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Serve plain or with your favorite fish sauce. Serves 6.

Earn Your Fishing Diploma

By GFC Staff

You don't have to be the John Wayne of fishing to hang a "Big Catch" certificate on your wall. All you have to do is catch one of 33 eligible species of fish that meets or exceeds the qualifying size.

For instance, your largemouth bass must weigh at least 8 pounds or be 24 inches long. So far, 403 people have registered "Big Catch" largemouth. Sixty-nine anglers have landed a flathead catfish over 25 pounds or 36 inches long; 35 have qualified with peacock bass, which must be over 5 pounds (18 inches).

You fill out an application to the "Big Catch" angler recognition program, have a witness sign it and submit it to the Division of Fisheries. The fish may be kept or released.

It takes some doing, however, to snag certificates in three advanced categories. "Specialists" must catch five qualifying fish of the same species – Richard Wallace of Martinsville, Ohio, for example, qualifies for both striped and sunshine bass.

A "Master" angler catches large fish from five different species. Take Judie Lander of Old Town, who caught black crappie, bluegill, bowfin, largemouth bass and redbreast sunfish to become a master.

Up to now, eight "Masters" and 21 "Specialists" have been recognized.

The ultimate achievement is landing

Register Your "Big Catch" and Receive a Certificate

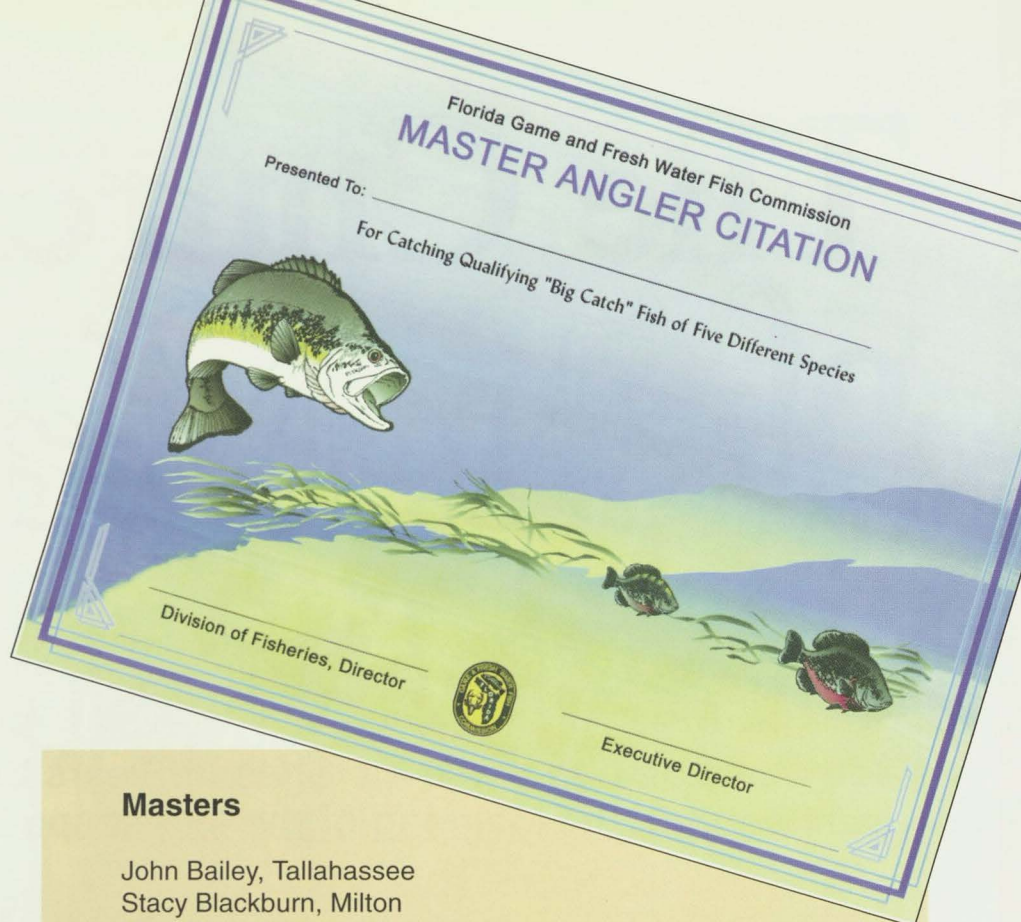
qualifying fish from 10 of the 33 species to become an "Elite" angler. To date no one had made it to "Elite," but Stacy Blackburn of Milton is on the verge, with nine species registered.

There is also a new category for youths under 16 in which qualifying sizes have been reduced about 25 percent.

As of press deadline, the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) has issued 1,110 certificates, including 93 to young people. The greatest number have been for largemouth bass, including one registered at 18.31 pounds. Had that fish been witnessed by a fisheries biologist and weighed on a certified scale, it would have been a new state record. (The current record is 17.27 pounds.)

In response to new fisheries management, fishing in Florida is improving following a prolonged drought. In the last 10 years, Florida's trophy bass have had a tremendous resurgence, as documented by tournament results. In one example, there were no bass over 10 pounds caught in tournaments in 1990-91 and by the end of 1997, 27 bass of that size were reported.

For a list of "Big Catch" species and qualifying weights, including records, or for an application to the program, check the Fisheries web site (see article on page 9) or call the GFC regional office nearest you, listed inside the front cover of this magazine. ●



Masters

John Bailey, Tallahassee
 Stacy Blackburn, Milton
 Paul Cole, St. Augustine
 Archie Collum Jr., Milton
 Boe Jacquard, Inglis
 Julie Lander, Old Town
 Donny Parmer, Marianna
 Jeff Price, Miami

Specialists

John Bailey, Tallahassee – White Catfish
 Stacy Blackburn, Milton – Black Crappie & Yellow Bullhead
 Archie Collum Jr., Milton – Spotted Sunfish
 Ron Gaylen, Lochloosa – Sunshine Bass
 Stanley Harvey, Oakland Park – Peacock Bass
 James Hinton Jr., Jennings – Largemouth Bass
 Boe Jacquard, Inglis – Largemouth Bass
 John Leahy, Columbus – Largemouth Bass
 Lawrence Liszka Jr., Sanford – Sunshine Bass
 Donny Parmer, Mariana – Flathead Catfish
 Bobby Rice, Tallahassee – Flier
 Michael Rushing, Tallahassee – Largemouth Bass
 Clyde Rutledge, Hawthorne – Sunshine Bass
 Marlon Sapp, Blountstown – Flathead Catfish
 Samuel Schult, Miami – Peacock Bass
 Robert Smith, Salt Springs – Largemouth Bass
 Richard Wallace, Martinsville, Ohio – Striped and Sunshine Bass
 Shawn Wright, Pembroke Pines – Peacock Bass
 Terry Young, Lakeland – Brown Bullhead

**For an instant Florida fishing license
 call toll-free 1-888-FISH-FLORIDA**

The Church of St. Marks

By Susan Cerulean

You may come to these marshes for years before you hear their deepest sound: the claiming of the landscape by alligators.

I think of a refuge as a place I go towards, that I return to over and over again, for renewal, for surprise, for play. I go alone, or with family and friends; I go to walk, to write, to kayak, to explore, to pick up trash, to pray. And the refuge I turn to as often as possible, sometimes once every week: St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge.

It took me more than 15 years to figure out that the refuge can be friendly in more than just the coolest months. It had been a tradition among my birding friends to come with the migratory ducks in late October or November, and stop visiting about the time the spring neotropical migrants made their appearance in March. The biting insects at the coast are generally ruthless when the temperature is above 65 degrees or so, unless you are moving quickly, on a bike or in a boat. But I've found that at dawn, the trails are user-friendly even in July, and a full moon bike ride is breathtaking any time of the year.

Sunny winter days are most fun for children. My son and our good friends like to head for a particular salt barren, a sort of beach-without-the-ocean, almost enclosed by salt marsh grasses and wet pine flatwoods. We follow the tracks of

bobcat, raccoon and crab, we build small forts out of downed cabbage palm leaves, we eat a picnic lunch. There's always something we didn't expect. Sometimes it's a temporarily trapped school of startled fish, sometimes an eagle forcing an osprey to drop its prey midair, almost always a sense of how happy we are.

You may come to these marshes for years before you hear their deepest sound: the claiming of the landscape by alligators. Last February, hiking my usual path,

I heard something like a motor turning over and over, rumbling, never quite catching. The sound was less heard than felt in the body, in the gut. I watched the smaller gators, active, swimming about, but silent, and then finally located the source of the sound. The 10- or 12-foot animal rose like an upended log from a shallow pool, blowing out its throat pouch, teeth barely exposed. The life of the whole marsh lifted at that moment through the bellow of the alligator, above ▸



Michael Wisenbaker

Ted Rose





eagles' cries and songs of red-winged blackbirds, and lifted through me, calling me to greater attention and gratitude.

At that moment, I was finally able to explain my lagging attendance at church to my friend and pastor: I have converted, or perhaps returned, to a spiritual practice that requires the presence of alligators on Sunday mornings.

*Susan Cerulean is watchable wildlife coordinator for the GFC and co-author of the **Florida Wildlife Viewing Guide**.*

Michael Wisenbaker



Above: Pine lilies bloom in summer and fall in the pine flatwoods of St. Marks.

Left: The St. Marks lighthouse was built in 1831 and moved to its present location in 1842.

Page 19

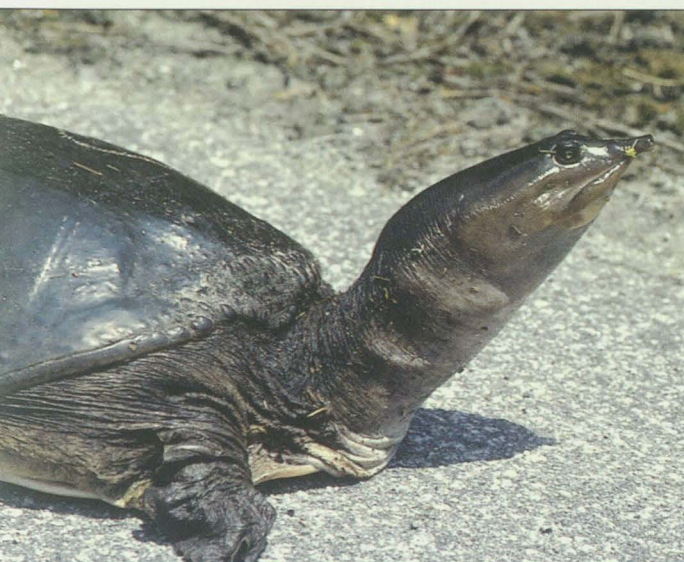
Top right: The Pinhook River is a seven-mile bicycle ride from county road 59, the St. Marks spur of Highway 98.

Bottom left: A softshell tortoise makes his way to another water hole.

Bottom right: Sunset on the beach at St. Marks.

William J. Weber

For the more than 274 bird, 67 reptile, 40 amphibian and 52 mammal species that depend on St. Marks for portions of their life cycles, this place is indeed a sanctuary: nearly 70,000 acres of marsh, uplands and artificial impoundments designed particularly for wintering waterfowl. St. Marks, located south of Tallahassee off Highway 98 near Newport, is one of 508 refuges throughout the U.S. administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. ●



page 19 photos by Michael Wisenbaker



Bag of Tricks

Ways To Call Your Turkey In

By Lt. Stan Kirkland

"Hunters who call birds before the season or call a bird in and let the bird see them are giving that bird an education."



Stan Kirkland

I remember this particular turkey hunting trip like it was yesterday. It was only my second or third hunt ever, and I was headed to the woods that lay beyond Merritt's Mill Pond, near our home in Jackson County.

Easing my father's 14-foot boat up to the bank, I stepped out and worked my way 100 yards or so up the ridge. In the pre-dawn darkness I stood dwarfed by oaks and hickories, listening to a distant 18-wheeler climbing a hill and an occasional mosquito buzzing by.

After a while I heard a barred owl hooting and then a gobbler answered 200-300 yards down the ridge. As it became lighter, I heard another gobbler reverberating through the woods to my left. I knew these woods – the second bird was near some big live oaks along an old pond bottom. Putting my hand on the Lynch's box call in my pocket, I figured this would be a piece of cake. I visualized killing a big gobbler and even fishing some before heading home.

Boy, did I ever get an education. I picked out a good spot on the ridge and, since the first gobbler was closest, made my way what I felt was halfway to him and sat down. After positioning my shotgun in my lap, I took out my yelper, chalked the underside of the paddle, and made three or four strikes against the box in my best hen imitation. The gobbler answered with a "gil-obble-obble-obble" and I called again.

The gobbler answered back and I waited and waited, but the big bird never

showed. He came to within 60-70 yards at one point, gobbling all the while, but there was nothing I could do to get this bird in closer. Finally, the dominant old boss seemed to lose interest in my offerings and clammed up.

Not to be defeated, I eased through the woods toward gobbler number two, but no amount of calling could produce a response.

Hungry and not quite sure what to make of my morning, I walked back to the boat. As I racked back my Remington 1100 autoloader to unload it, a gobbler jarred the ground up the ridge opposite

where I'd hunted, and then, incredibly, another bird sounded 1/4-mile up the pond.

Revitalized, I grabbed my shotgun shells, reloaded the gun and quickly made my way back up the ridge. Over the next hour, gobbler number three let loose with probably 50-60 gobblers, but would get no closer than 60 yards, even though I could occasionally see him strutting and parading back and forth in a small clearing. Finally at 11 a.m. I threw in the towel and left.

What I've learned over the last 30 years is that I didn't do anything wrong

that morning, I just needed a few tricks up my sleeve for birds that are stubborn about coming in.

"Not all birds will come in," said Mark Sasser, a Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) wildlife biologist. An ardent spring turkey hunter, Sasser says there are days when even the country's elite turkey hunters can't call in birds.

"Gobblers that are older are naturally wary, but if you're hunting in an area where the birds have been confused by people calling to them, then it becomes much more difficult to call a bird into shooting range," he said. "Hunters who call birds before the season or call a bird in and let the bird see them are giving that bird an education."

Hayes Morris, a Bay County logger and a turkey hunter, has taken his share of gobblers here in Florida. He learned early that it often takes more than a turkey yelper to bag a bird or two each spring. He uses locator calls: an owl hooter and a pileated woodpecker call provoke a gobbler into giving away his location.

Then Morris opens his bag of tricks. A mouth yelper and slate call imitate a hen turkey. A fighting purr friction call mimics a pair of gobblers engaged in combat, and a real turkey wing duplicates the sound of a turkey flying down from the roost.

For Morris, hunting without his "extras" would be tantamount to leaving his shotgun at home. Just last spring his hunting skills and aids were put to the test in Bay County by an older gobbler.

"The first time I heard him he was on the roost, so I got probably 100 yards from him and set up," Morris said. "I had used my pileated woodpecker call and he answered, so I knew exactly where he was. I clucked to him and he flew down in some thick stuff and I'd yelp but he wasn't coming. He'd march back and forth, gobbling."

Realizing he needed different tactics, Morris moved a few feet closer to the gobbler but this time used a mouth yelper, hand-held slate call and the turkey wing to make purrs, clucks and the sound of turkeys fighting.

"It was unbelievable," Morris said. "That bird was probably 75 yards from me and came to within 20 yards in ▷

Spring gobbler season is March 21 through April 26 for the northwest and central zones, March 7 to April 2 for the south.



Ted Rose

"I thought there were only two gobblers but eight longbeards came running directly at me," Morris said. "They thought there was a fight. I was sitting on the ground and could actually feel the ground shaking where they ran up."

probably a minute. He was totally mesmerized. When I shot him, he was in full strut."

The old gobbler Morris bagged the third day of the 1997 spring season had probably seen many real turkey fights and figured this was just one more. Although he was unable to weigh his bird, Morris estimated its weight at 16-17 pounds. His beard later measured 9½ inches.

Wild turkeys in other areas of the United States can be fooled by some of the same methods.

On a trip several years ago to the hill country of southwest Texas to hunt the Rio Grande subspecies, Morris said he and friend Jack Vogel found plenty of talkative gobblers. Vogel had killed his bag limit of two birds, but Morris said after calling in and killing a lone gobbler, he seemed jinxed. When other gobblers flew down from the live oaks and wild pecan trees, instead of coming to Morris they turned and went the other way.

Hearing several gobblers on a hillside among some pinyon pines, Morris devised a plan where Vogel would get behind him

and sound a wooden box call. At the same time, Morris began using a mouth call to "cut" loudly and simultaneously strike the fighting purr call. The plan worked to perfection.

"I thought there were only two gobblers but eight longbeards came running directly at me," Morris said. "They thought there was a fight. I was sitting on the ground and could actually feel the ground shaking when they ran up."

At six steps his gun barked and a Texas 8½-inch longbeard finished out his bag.

While every turkey hunt – and every hunter – is different, the odds for success can be improved by learning everything you can about wild turkeys and being willing to cope with the unexpected. Next time that gobbler hangs up at 60 yards, be innovative. 🦃

Lt. Stan Kirkland is the public information director for the GFC's northwest region.



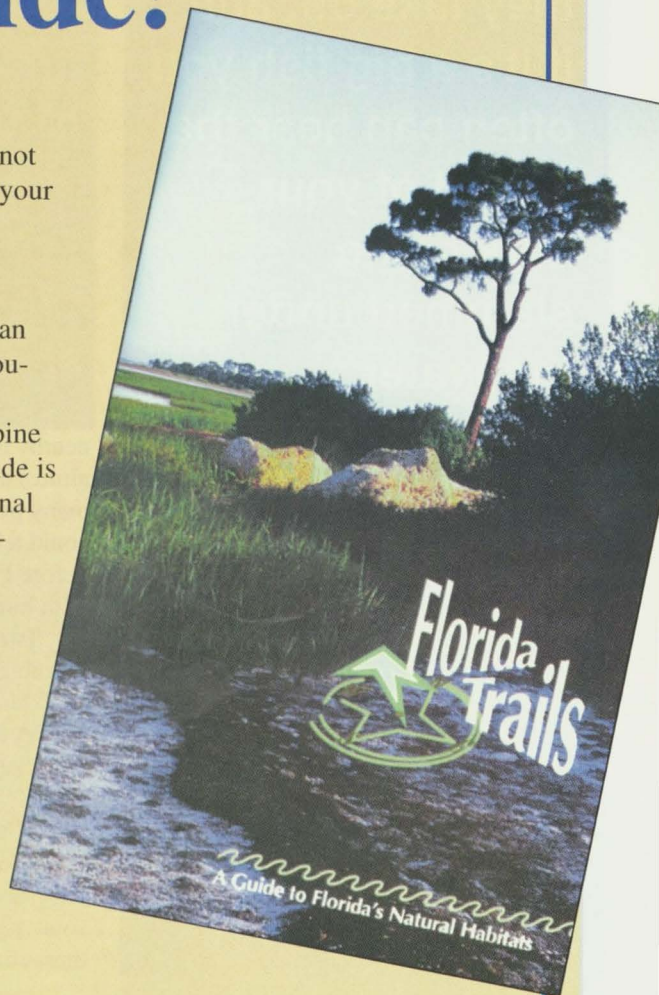
Ted Rose

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“When a striper or hybrid hits it, they take off, and if it’s a big fish you often can hear the sound of your cork being slammed under the water.”

Catching Sunshine and Stripers on the Choctawhatchee

It’s been almost two years since I was asked to stop and score a nice buck at a home in the Bruce Community of Walton County.

After helping measure the rack, Paul Fannin, the rack’s owner and an excellent taxidermist in his own right, said he wanted to show me something. We walked into his house and there on the wall were mounted replicas of two of the biggest sunshine bass I had ever seen.

“Caught both right down here in the river not far from the house,” Fannin said. “The biggest one weighed 16 pounds, 1 ounce and the other one 15 pounds. I thought I was going to break the record but haven’t done it yet.”

The Florida record sunshine bass weighed 16 pounds, 4 ounces.

Fannin went on to say catching both big sunshine bass – or hybrids, as many anglers refer to them, and striped bass nearby in the Choctawhatchee River was almost as easy as falling off a log. While many people enjoy a good fishing story, I could tell Fannin knew the river and before I left I had an invitation to fish with him in the Choctawhatchee.

Two weeks later on a cool May morning Fannin and I pushed off from an Ebro landing at daylight and had motored a short distance downstream when Fannin remarked, “That’s what we’re looking for.”

What he was looking for, as I learned to appreciate, were great egrets standing knee-deep in the edge of the river, and some perched overhead, dining on threadfin shad. Where you have threadfin

shad, he explained, “There’s going to be stripers and hybrids feeding on them.”

Fannin motored up close to the birds and with a single throw of his eight-foot bait cast net, caught probably three dozen 2 ½ to 3-inch shad. He quickly dumped the shad in a homemade, aerated holding tank and we were ready for business. We idled into a small cove off the river, a spot where Fannin had found fish a week earlier, and using a cork and 2/0 hook cast an active shad into a deep hole.

The red and white cork moved first one way, then the other, as the shad tried to find somewhere to hide. I couldn’t help but notice tiny rain-like dimples on the water. Fannin said the dimples were threadfin shad coming to the surface and schooling as they prepared to spawn. In fact, following our day’s fishing, the inside of his bait tank was coated with orangish-brown eggs.

“Something’s after it,” Fannin said, and no sooner than he spoke his cork disappeared under the surface in one sudden move. Fannin yanked back on the 6 ½-foot rod. After a brief fight, he brought a beautiful 8-pound striped bass to the boat and lifted him in.

He pitched out another cork-and-shad combination and something immediately went after it. The cork would stand up, lay flat and move in circles. Fannin knew from experience what the culprit was – longnose gar. Setting the hook, he pulled in a three-foot-long gar. Instead of hooking the gar, the line had formed a noose around the gar’s toothy bill.

“You can always tell when it’s a gar,

Text and Photographs by Lt. Stan Kirkland



Like great egrets, sunshine bass feed on spawning threadfin shad.

'cause they'll just sit there and fiddle with it," he said. "When a striper or hybrid hits it, they take off, and if it's a big fish you often can hear the sound of your cork being slammed under the water."

A few minutes later his cork darted under and Fannin brought in a four-pound hybrid, which went into the live well.

While striped bass and hybrids are closely related, they are fairly easy to distinguish. Striped bass are generally long and sleek with straight lateral lines on the sides. They are spawned and stocked in several major rivers, including the Apalachicola and St. Johns, where dams and other hazards affect natural reproduction.

Hybrids, or sunshine bass, on the other hand, have a deep paunch or stomach, broken lateral lines, and usually are a more compact fish. Hybrids are produced in fish hatcheries in Florida and ▷



peggy perkerson

then stocked in rivers and lakes where threadfin shad is a food source.

In Florida, hybrids have been stocked by the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (GFC) since the late 1970s, first in the Panhandle and then elsewhere. Fannin's 16-pound, 1-ounce hybrid was caught in the spring of 1987 and chronicled in a local newspaper. Fannin still has the tattered, yellow clipping.

The Apalachicola River holds the record for the biggest hybrid caught in the state but Fannin believes fish as big swim the lower 20 miles of the Choctawhatchee and are waiting to be caught by those who learn how to fish for them.

In addition to his two biggest hybrids, he's caught a 15-pounder, a 14-pounder, and, last spring, two 13-pound fish in one morning. The longer of the two measured a hefty 31 inches.

On our morning trip, Fannin used a cork until the sun cleared the tree line.

"When the sun comes out, hybrids and stripers go deeper," he said, "and if you're going to catch fish, you've got to get down there where they are." He then began using only the 2/0 hook and shad, a method that proved just as effective. In just a few minutes we picked up another nice striped bass, along with several gar.

While it's a matter of debate as to who learned the shad-fishing method and introduced it on the Choctawhatchee, Fannin was one of the first. In the mid-'70s he stumbled upon the technique.

"A high school buddy and I were fishing down here in Black Creek when we saw a largemouth bass tear into a bunch of shad up near the bank," he said. "I took a regular old dip net and caught a couple of shad, and then got out of the

boat on a tree laying there in the water. I pitched that shad where I had seen the strike and 'pow', my rod bent double. I caught a largemouth that weighed exactly 7 pounds.

"That left an impression on me and later I learned that shad were great for catching stripers and hybrids."

One important thing: every angler who plans to use threadfin shad as bait should recognize how sensitive they are to mishandling.

"When we started out fishing with them we'd catch some and put them in a bait bucket and in a minute they were dead. And if you're fishing for stripers and hybrids in this river with dead bait, you're wasting your time," he said.

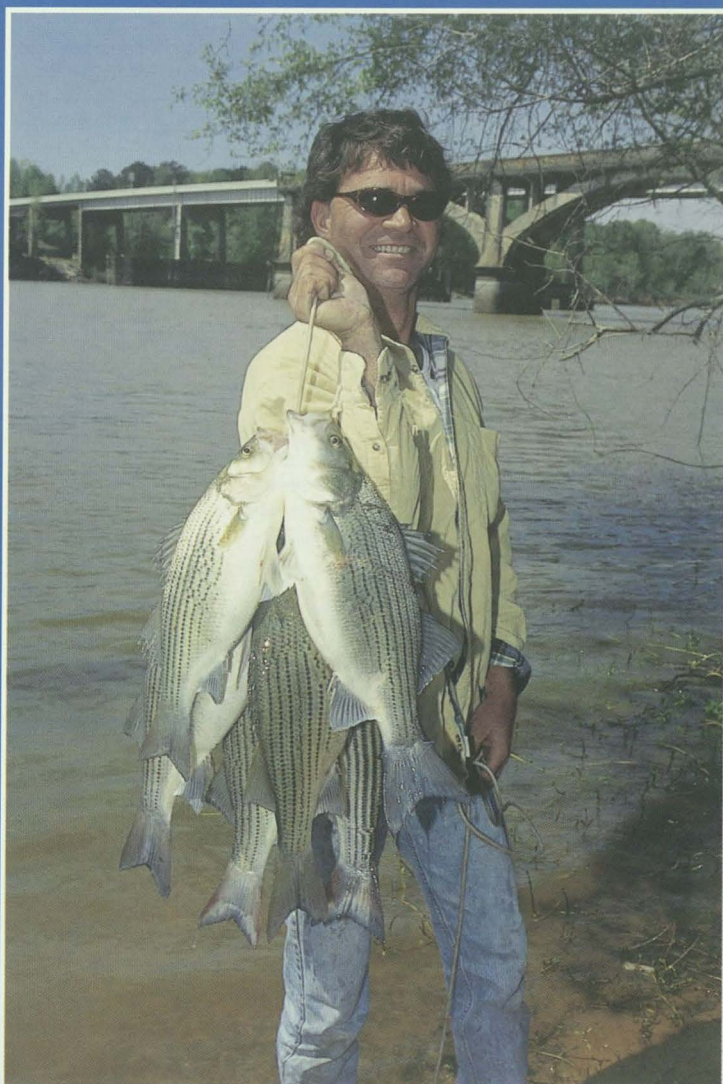
"Then we tried putting them in live wells and that didn't work well either. Especially in rectangular live wells, they'd beat themselves up butting into a corner. We finally went to round aerated tanks. You can keep bait all day in one of these tanks."

Fishing for both stripers and hybrids by his methods, as he explains, is dependent on finding shad. Both bass species are in the area year-round, as are the shad. Because of their spawning ritual, however, the threadfin shad congregate near the surface and the shoreline from March until the water temperature begins to climb above 70 degrees Fahrenheit, which is usually late May or early June.

For Fannin, the shad's dispersal in summer gives him an opportunity to focus on other fish downstream near Choctawhatchee Bay, like keeper-sized redfish and speckled trout. One thing he's learned, however, is when the shad return early in the spring, plenty of stripers and hybrids will be keeping watch from below.

Note: Under the Florida wildlife code, bait cast nets may be used to catch shad and other baitfish in fresh water, and may be kept in the boat while striped bass or hybrid bass fishing. However, the possession of bait cast nets while fishing for other gamefish is prohibited. ●

GFC's Lt. Stan Kirkland, a member of the Florida Outdoor Writers Association, enjoys spending time outdoors.



Sunshine bass are stocked in the Apalachicola River, shown here, where the aggregate bag limit of white, striped and sunshine bass is 20 fish. However, only three may be stripers, which must be over 18 inches long.

Early Light – Egret

A limited edition Charles Rowe print

Through special arrangement with noted artist Charles Rowe, the Wildlife Foundation of Florida Inc. is offering a limited press run of *Early Light – Egret*. The quality prints are reproduced on neutral pH paper, printed with colorfast inks. Each print is individually signed and numbered by the artist, shrink-wrapped and shipped flat in a special container direct to you from the artist's studio via UPS.

Proceeds of the print sale will be deposited with the Wildlife Foundation of Florida Inc., a not-for-profit foundation. One-half of the print cost will help defray *Florida Wildlife* magazine's manuscript, photography and editorial expenses. The Wildlife Foundation of Florida Inc. will send you a federal income tax gift statement for the value of your donation: one-half the cost of each print.

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Early Light – Egret print by wildlife artist Charles Rowe captures the feeling of the first light in the canopied creek that winds through dense, primeval forests. The creek, known as Juniper Springs, is surrounded by a lush forest of palms, cypress and southern hardwoods. The original painting is done in egg tempera. The 12" x 18" print is available in a limited press run of 275.



Fly-Fishing For Pickerel

Text and Photographs by Tom Broderidge

“Jack” is a common name for the eastern chain pickerel, but many anglers curse them. And that’s difficult to understand, because if you fish for fun and you use light tackle, you couldn’t ask for much more from a gamefish.

Watching Reggie Roddenberry work his top water fly through a weed-choked area of Lake Jackson was like watching someone at work rather than play. Bending forward from the waist, he pointed his fly rod directly at the yellow fly line which ran straight to his deer hair bug that was crawling over, then under, then through, tangles of aquatic grass and lily pads. But it wasn’t until the bug reached relatively open water that the game became serious.

Roddenberry’s body was tense, straining toward every movement of the fly, shunning interruption. Though his face was hidden beneath dark sunglasses and the overhanging brim of a large hat, perspiration flowed freely from his hairline, running in continuous rivulets down the side of his face. Roddenberry made no attempt to wipe it off.

I couldn’t help but think: here is an accomplished fisherman, one who has fished for more than four decades, and he is standing on the front of his boat on a good bass lake in Florida and he is not fishing for bass. He is fishing for pickerel.

In 30 seconds or so I would understand why.

The bug he used was a Dahlberg

Diver, a well-known fly that floats at rest, but because its nose is trimmed into the shape of a bell cut in half lengthwise it dives under the water when the line is pulled sharply. It also makes noise when it dives. Writers sometimes try to convey this noise on the page by using onomatopoeic words like “glurp” or “bloomp.” None of them quite do it. You have got to hear it in the water. In this case a pickerel did.

The next few events happened very quickly, almost instantaneously.

First, a dark green shadow emerged from the weed line off to the right. Next, a small wave appeared behind the fly. And then the fly was gone and the fly line was making a steady rubbing sound as it slipped through Roddenberry's fingers.

The fight was good while it lasted. The pickerel tried to dive back into the weeds, but Roddenberry turned it away. The fish headed to the weed bed on the other side of the cove, and Roddenberry stopped it again. Then the pickerel floated to the surface and allowed itself to be reeled in. When it got up next to the boat, however, it began thrashing around and left the water in what could have been two or three semi-connected average jumps or one spectacular leap. Anyway, the whole thing was over in about fifteen seconds. The pickerel weighed no more than a pound.

Two anglers had been watching from another boat a few hundred yards away. Their conversation carried to us on the wind.

“What'd he get? Bass?”

“Nah, just a jack.”

“Garbage fish.”

Talk about a fish not getting much respect. “Jack” is a common name for the eastern chain pickerel, but many anglers curse them. And that's difficult to understand, because if you fish for fun and you use light tackle, you couldn't ask for much more from a gamefish.

Pickerel are found in many waters throughout the state, are aggressive and readily hit flies, yet catching really large ones requires considerable skill. And it helps to know something about their behavior.

The preferred spot for a pickerel is in thick weeds. More precisely, its body will be in the weeds but its head will be pointing out toward open water. From ▷



Reggie Roddenberry, above, proves that pickerel readily hit flies, especially poppers, sliders and deceivers, below.



here it is set to ambush almost anything that passes by, including baitfish and other smaller fish, as well as frogs and mice splashing along the surface.

Almost all flies that resemble baitfish will catch pickerel at one time or another, but flies that can be trailed in front of or slightly above the pickerel's nose will trigger a strike most often. For shallow water fishing, use flies that sink slowly and don't go very far below the surface. Flies such as the popular Deceiver that are tied with lots of buoyant material (like bucktail) are ideal for this.

It's possible that you won't catch quite as many pickerel using surface flies, but probably you will get more enjoyment from the experience. Top-water fishing for pickerel is a good way to test not only your reflexes but also your heart.

There are two basic types of top-water bugs: poppers and sliders. Poppers often are made with concave faces so they churn up the surface as they splash along, resembling some animal that has fallen into the water and is trying to escape. Sliders usually have a pointed head and are made to dive under the water during the retrieve, making less disturbance as

they slide, imitating perhaps a wounded baitfish that tries to swim normally but continually reverts to a floating position at or just under the surface.

Roddenberry carries a good supply of all these flies in a wide variety of bright colors.

"You never know what will turn pickerel on from day to day," he says.

Whether you fish on the surface or below it, the retrieve should be steady rather than hesitant and fast rather than slow. In fact, if a pickerel follows the fly but doesn't strike, speed up the retrieve. Slowing down or stopping the fly altogether rarely stimulates further interest.

Fly tackle for pickerel doesn't have to be especially strong to adequately fight these fish. Most pickerel weigh under two pounds, and a pickerel over four pounds is worth mentioning at the next visit to your local tackle shop. The real requirement for fly tackle is enough weight to cast the large, wind-resistant flies needed to catch the bigger fish.

The edges of a pickerel's mouth are hard, and hooks in sizes 1/0 and larger will have a better chance of being in position to penetrate. But flies on these

hooks tend to be three or four inches long and bulky, and most fly fishers will need at least a 7-weight fly rod to feel comfortable casting them, especially if there is any kind of wind.

Fly lines should be of the weight-forward design with short, heavy front tapers that are usually called "rocket" or "bass bug" tapers.

Finally, pickerel have sharp teeth, and so a shock tippet between the leader and fly will help you land more fish. Six inches of 40 or 60-pound test monofilament usually does the trick, and "harder" mono leader material is generally more abrasion resistant than the line sold to fill up spinning reels.

"Wire leaders will work too, but you normally won't get as many strikes," Roddenberry says. "And I want all the strikes I can get."

The daily bag limit on pickerel in Florida is 15. There is no minimum size. ●

Tom Broderidge is a writer, photographer and fly fisher living in Gadsden County.



The fang-like teeth of the chain pickerel, a member of the pike family, enable it to catch small fish and frogs.

attention: • Local government planners • Ecotour operators • Natural resource educators and interpreters • Resource managers • Tourism professionals • Conservation organization members •

Florida's Third Statewide Watchable Wildlife Conference

May 20-21, 1998
Holiday Inn, Cocoa Beach, Florida

Wildlife viewing is the fastest growing recreational and travel pursuit of the decade – an \$18.1 billion industry. How can the state of Florida find the balance between preserving and promoting its extraordinary wildlife heritage? Several dozen acclaimed national and state experts will discuss nature and heritage tourism during this two-day conference.



Alison Deming

**Alison Deming
KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Alison Deming is author of *Temporary Homelands: Essays on Nature, Spirit and Place*. She is director of the University of Arizona Poetry Center, and has traveled widely, examining the worldwide phenomenon of ecotourism.

Tuesday, May 19, Optional pre-conference workshops

- How to create nature-based festivals and special events
- For small ecotourism businesses: effective self-marketing and more
- Design and manage your site for sustainable nature-based recreation
- Conservation and nature-based tourism at Kennedy Space Center
- How to teach Birding 101

Tuesday Evening May 19

- Forgotten Language: Public reading of nature writing

Wednesday and Thursday, May 20-21

- The new Great Florida Birding Trail
- Beyond birding festivals
- Watchable Wildlife partnerships
- The Fort Belknap story: western tribes turn to ecotourism for economic survival
- How to make a birding bed-and-breakfast work: the B-Bar-B ranch experience
- Brevard County's new plan for nature-based recreation
- Effective ecotour programming for children and adults
- New developments in ecotourism in Florida

To obtain a full conference brochure and registration information, call Nancy Jordan at (850) 488-4676.

Sponsored by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission and Florida's Space Coast, in cooperation with the Wildlife Foundation of Florida Inc.

1998-99 Turkey and Waterfowl Stamp Winners

By Janisse Ray
Photographs by William A. Greer

1998-99 Turkey Stamp Winner

Jeffrey Klinefelter's oil painting of eastern turkeys in woods, "Woodland Trio," won Florida's stamp design competition this year. Klinefelter is an Indiana wildlife artist who has won stamp contests in Oklahoma, Delaware, Nevada and Indiana, among others.

The stamp will be available from county tax collectors beginning July 1 for \$5, plus the agent's fee.

Artist proofs and limited edition prints may be purchased from Jeffrey Klinefelter, P.O. Box 4, Etna Green, IN 46524. His phone number is (219) 858-9449. The original is available.



WOODLAND TRIO by Jeffrey Klinefelter, Etna Green, Indiana

1998-99 Waterfowl Stamp Winner

This year's first-place winner in the waterfowl stamp design contest is Brian S. Blight of Media, Pennsylvania. His entry was an acrylic painting of northern shovelers. Blight won the Nevada contest in 1997.

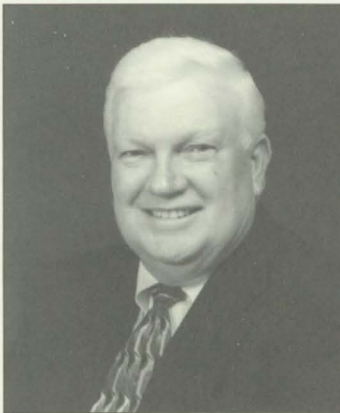
The stamps featuring his art are scheduled to go on sale July 1 at county tax collectors' offices. They will cost \$3, plus the agent's fee.

Limited edition prints and artist proofs may be purchased from Brian S. Blight, 1016 West Baltimore Pike Unit B-1, Media, PA 19063. His phone number is (610) 627-2589. The original is available.



NORTHERN SHOVELERS by Brian S. Blight, Media, Pennsylvania

Compiled by Janisse Ray



ADAMS NAMED TO COMMISSION

A former wildlife officer and county sheriff has been appointed by Gov. Lawton Chiles to fulfill a five-year term on the Commission. James L. Adams Jr., 56, of Bushnell spent 17 years as a wildlife officer before being elected sheriff of Sumter County. He filled that post from 1981 until 1997.

"I love the Game Commission. It's where my roots are," Adams said.

Adams, an avid hunter and angler, is president of the Florida Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. His two sons are both wildlife officers with the GFC. Adams said Florida's rapid growth poses a challenge for the five-member commission and its staff.

"We're slowly shrinking the state," he said. "We're going to have to do something to conserve water resources."

FOR WOMEN ONLY

The next "Becoming an Outdoors Woman" weekend will take place April 3-5 at the Ocala Youth Camp. The workshop, designed to introduce women to outdoor sports like hunting, fishing, hiking and camping, offers hands-on instruction in a non-threatening atmosphere. Classes are offered in birdwatching, archery, outdoor survival, boating and fly-fishing, among others.

Registration forms may be obtained by calling the GFC Everglades Regional Office at (561) 625-5122. The \$100 registration fee covers instruction, materials, equipment, meals and lodging.

FOXHUNTING WITHOUT FOXES

The photographs in the January-February foxhunting story were taken by Alan Youngblood, staff photographer for *The Ocala Star-Banner*. We regret Youngblood's credit was omitted.

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHERS AND ARTISTS TAKE NOTE

The deadline for *Florida Wildlife's* annual wildlife photography contest is June 15.

You may enter in one or all of the following categories: Wild Birds, Wild Animals and Florida's Natural Environment. Only 35 mm slides are acceptable.

Artists may send up to three entries in the magazine's cover art contest. Media such as acrylics, watercolors, oils and pastels are recommended. Subject matter must be of a native Florida wildlife species – nongame, game or endangered.

The winning artist's work will be the cover of the September-October 1998 issue.

Entries in the cover art contest must be postmarked by May 13, 1998.

To order rules and entry forms in either contest, call Florida Wildlife at (850) 488-5563 or e-mail subletd@mail.state.fl.us

SPRING OUTINGS

Festivals at refuges and parks across the state are celebrating birds and other wildlife this spring. These events offer a fun way to learn more about your local environment as well as to spend a sunny day in a beautiful place.

Most are one-day events that offer birding talks and tours, children's activities, information on natural history and ideas for citizen action.

Below is a list of festivals:

March 14 Anniversary Celebration of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge (with unveiling of Paul Kroegel statue) near Sebastian, (561) 589-2089

March 21-22 Pioneer Days, Historic Cocoa Village, (407) 690-1971

March 27-29 Ridge and Range Birding Festival at Lake Wales Ridge State Forest, (941) 635-7801

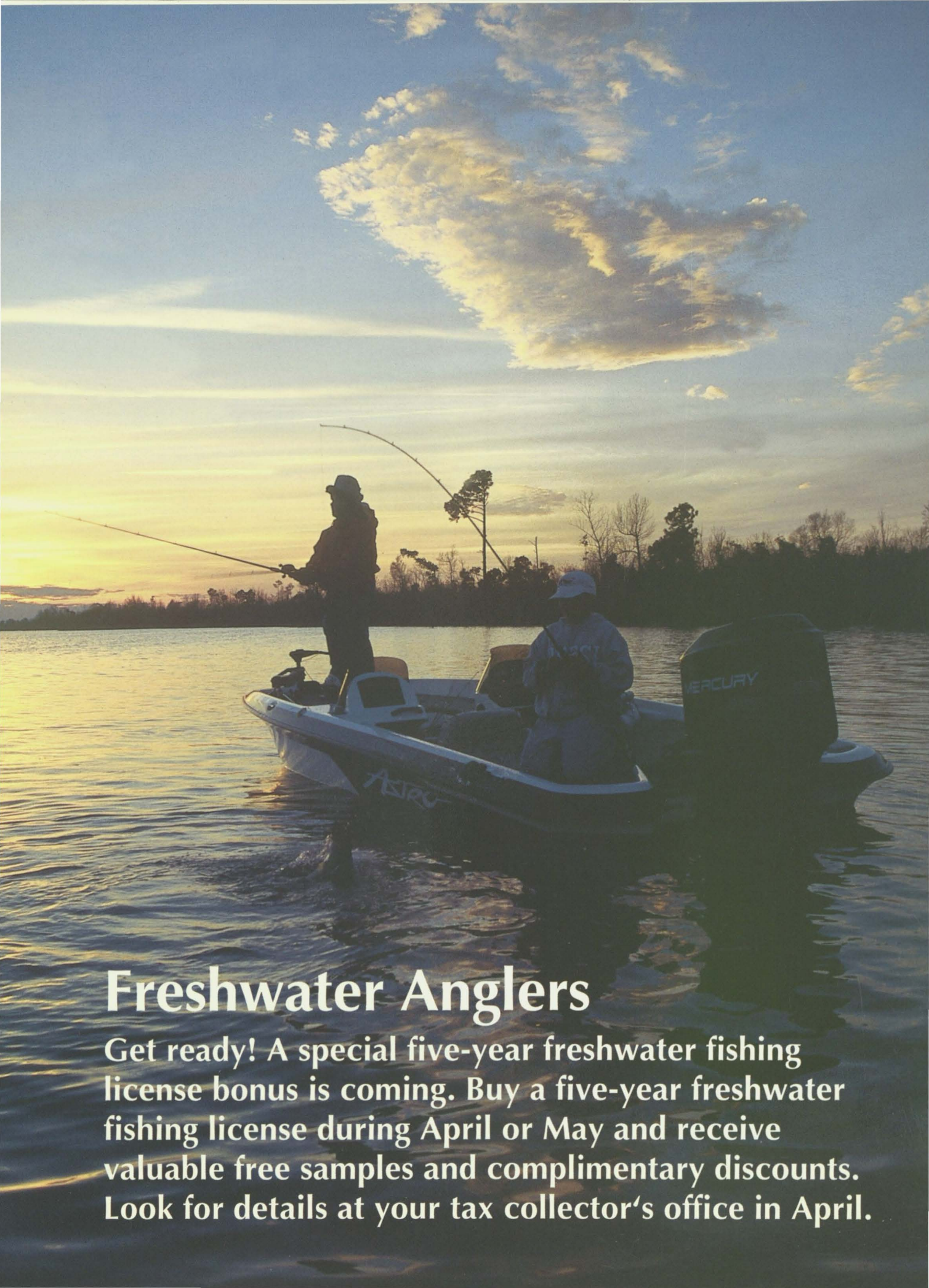
April 4 Welcome Back Songbirds at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Titusville, (407) 861-0667

April 4-5 Florida's Hidden Coast Birdfest, Fanning Springs, (352) 955-2200

April 11 Welcome Back Songbirds at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Tallahassee (850) 925-6121

April 18 Welcome Back Songbirds at Chinsegut Nature Center, Brooksville, (352) 754-6722 and at Wekiwa Springs State Park, Apopka, (407) 884-2008.

April 22 is Earth Day, with many events planned throughout the state. 🌱



Freshwater Anglers

Get ready! A special five-year freshwater fishing license bonus is coming. Buy a five-year freshwater fishing license during April or May and receive valuable free samples and complimentary discounts. Look for details at your tax collector's office in April.